dues of all the 142 employees separated through VRS between November 2000 and January 2001 have now been settled.

(b) The diversion was necessitated in view of the orders from the court (23 persons), orders of Assistant Labour Commissioner (ALC) (9 persons) and legal notices (9 persons). It was contemplated that the same would be replenished from funds that may be made available for payment of gratuity of the said superannuated employees.

(c) and (d) Payments of interest on gratuity to the superannuated employees were made at rates varying from 5% to 10% as per court/ ALC orders. The gratuity dues of all the 142 employees separated through VRS between November 2000 and January 2001 have since been settled.

Commissioning of Programmes by Guwahati DD Kendra

2790. SHRI INDRAMONI BORA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) The amount allocated for commissioning of the programmes by the Doordarshan in the year 2002-03 in Guwahati Doordarshan Kendra and PPC (NE); and

(b) The number of episodes allocated to the private producers and how many producers are from the North-Eastern States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Prasar Bharati has informed that an amount of Rs. 8.00 crores and Rs.10.5 crores respectively has been allocated to Doordarshan Kendra, Guwahati And PPC (NE), Guwahati for commissioning of programmes during the year 2002-2003.

(b) Prasar Bharati has informed that 1487 episodes were commissioned in DDK, Guwahati, all the producers of which are from North East only.

1379 episodes, from 410 producers, were commissioned in PPC, Guwahati, out of which 365 producers are from North East.

Use of Production and Broadcasting Facility of DD/AIR

2791. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA :

SHRI R.K. ANAND :

SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are willing to consider the use of production and broadcasting facility of DD and AIR by private companies to help revive both DD and AIR;

(b) if so, whether Government have received any proposals from the private companies on these lines;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, whether Government have plans to invite proposals in the near future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (d) Prasar Bharati has informed that Doordarshan and AIR lend their infrastructural facilities to private producers, after meeting their in-house production requirements, as per the prescribed rate card. This is a continuous process and depends of the requirements of each channel and station of DD/AIR, where such proposals are received. No centralized records are maintained on the hiring out of the production facilities.

Import of set top boxes

†2792. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM :

SHRI LAJPAT RAI :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether set top boxes are being imported;

(b) if so, who are the importers and suppliers of the boxes;

(c) the number of boxes already imported and at what rate; and

(d) the details, company-wise, brand-wise and price wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) As per data furnished by the Customs and Cental Excise authorities, 1,07,882 STBs have been imported by various Multi-System Operators/Cable Operators, as on 31.7.2003. According to data given by Multi System Operators (MSOs), orders for more STBs have been placed and these are expected to arrive in a phased manner. The cost of the box

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.